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Enclosure

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USIB-D-41.15/74
(COMOR-D-13/52-2)
3 January 1966
Limited Distribution

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

January 3, 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, United States Intelligence Board

SUBJECT: Reconnaissance Resources for
Crisis Management Situations

REFERENCE: USIB-D-41.15/72

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In the referenced document, the United States Intelligence Board requested that the National Reconnaissance Office advise the Board as soon as practicable on the results of its studies toward increasingly advantageous [REDACTED] capabilities and plans for speeding up processing and film handling. This request was pointed toward meeting the needs of the United States Government in critical international situations.

In responding to this request, the NRO is doing so in the light of the framework in which the subject of crisis management has been cast in previous Board discussions--namely, periods of international tension of some duration during which photographic reconnaissance might provide information of critical importance for policy decisions.

Over the past six months, several informal discussions on this subject have taken place between the NRO Staff and the COMOR. As a result, the NRO has evaluated all reconnaissance assets available now and in the near future which might be employed for crisis management purposes. Attached is a paper which briefly summarizes the characteristics, limitations, and program status of all satellite, aircraft, and drone reconnaissance systems in this category.

With regard to satellites, except for the use of CORONA (KH-4) as a means of providing coverage of those indications targets [REDACTED] near-term prospects are not good. [REDACTED]

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NRO review(s) completed.

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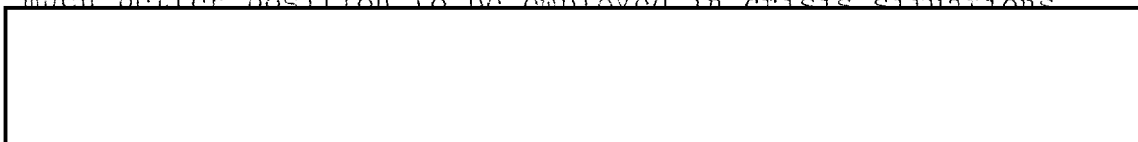
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The KH-4 program, because of its maturity, is in a much better position to be employed in crisis situations.

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to the Board, in conjunction with a regular launch in the next few months, I plan to test the reaction capability of the KH-4 and the processing/production facilities in a simulated crisis situation. Unfortunately, as noted previously, the resolution of the KH-4 is not adequate to provide a majority of the information needed.

I am sure the Board will agree that it and the NRO should together insure that plans are in effect to take maximum advantage of the KH-4. [REDACTED] has provided targeting for the use of [REDACTED] and I am advised that these targets are kept constantly under review in order to advise the NRO of any change. I am also advised that COMOR is indicating which of these targets might usefully be covered by the KH-4 if the situation demanded that both the KH-4 and [REDACTED] be used simultaneously to collect information at a given point in time.

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ILLEGIB

With regard to aircraft systems, the Board is well aware of the uses which could be made of the U-2 and the BLUE SPRINGS drones in crisis situations, particularly in those areas where present air defense capabilities permit. The OXCART aircraft will shortly be available for emergency situations which might arise in China and Southeast Asia. However, the use of the OXCART over the USSR when it achieves full operational capabilities poses certain problems, not so much in terms of its ability to survive, but rather in terms of its political impact. In some circumstances its use might exacerbate unpredictably the tense situation pertaining at a time of international crisis.

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In addition, there is the SAC version of the OXCART, namely, the SR-71, which will shortly become an available national asset.

There are two other photographic assets under development which would be of importance in covering crisis situations in certain areas, particularly, China and South-east Asia. I refer to the TACBOARD drone which will operate at high altitudes at [REDACTED]. This vehicle, which is launched from a modified OXCART aircraft, should be operational by late CY 1966. The Department of Defense is also purchasing advanced subsonic drones known as the 147-II which will be available by mid-1966, and is contemplating an even more advanced subsonic drone for use in CY 1968.

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25X1 The NRO has under active study and feasibility investigation [REDACTED] photographic readout satellite systems as a part of the NRP. Also, as a means of reducing the time of receipt of information after photography has been collected, the NRO is investigating the feasibility of installing an in-flight processing and exploitation capability in a KC-135 aircraft. This would permit a saving of many hours after the retrieval of either a manned aircraft or a satellite photographic package.

In summary, in consideration of the foregoing and the attachment, several points seem clear. Neither the existing satellite, aircraft, or drone systems nor those currently in development have the desired truly quick-reaction capability to deal properly with rapidly changing international situations. Aside from considerations of quick reaction, no single system available or contemplated is capable of doing the total crisis management task. Collectively, there is a substantial national collection capability on hand and/or projected for the near term which could be employed in an emergency.

The NRO will continue to improve the capabilities of all systems for use in crisis situations, including the reduction of time from retrieval of aircraft and satellite product to delivery of findings to national authorities. Additionally, greater emphasis will be placed on investigations leading toward quicker reacting photographic satellite

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systems (i.e. redundant)

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Alexander H. Flax
Director
National Reconnaissance Office

Attachment
Assets for Crisis Management

cc: Ch/COMOR

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